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Cassis' Amber Alert Abuse Bill Approved by Senate

LANSING – The state Senate today unanimously approved legislation sponsored by state Sens. Nancy Cassis and Mike Goschka to penalize people who falsely report an Amber Alert.

The need for the legislation arose from several cases where the Amber Alert system was abused, including a case in Tulsa, Okla., where a woman told police her child had been abducted when her car was stolen from a grocery store parking lot. She later recanted the story, telling police that she wanted a higher priority placed on finding her stolen vehicle. Another case in Edmond, Okla., involved a girl who was out with her boyfriend and convinced her brother to file a false report so that her parents would not know the truth as to why their daughter was not at home.

“When we first created Amber Alert, we did not envision that people would undermine this important system intended to protect children by filing false Amber Alerts,” said Cassis, R-Novi. “It’s like yelling ‘fire’ in a crowded theater when no smoke exists. Unfortunately, when a false report is filed, it unnecessarily ties up important resources at our law enforcement agencies; time, money and investigative efforts that must be available in the event they are needed.

Dubbed by Cassis as the “AAA” (Amber Alert Abuse) package, the legislation, Senate Bills 74 and 134, make it a felony to falsely report an Amber Alert and establish a penalty of up to four years in prison and fines up to \$2,000.

“This legislation is a proactive approach to deter those who might abuse the Amber Alert system and ensure the kinds of abuses that have happened elsewhere do not occur here in Michigan,” Cassis said.

Cassis sponsored Public Act 712 of 2002, which created Amber Alert of Michigan, a coordinated notification system between national, state and local law enforcement agencies and broadcasters to quickly locate abducted children through radio and television broadcast bulletins.

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